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**MIND THE GAP:
THE NEW CULTURE WARS**

Below are three quotes, picked almost at random from a depressingly long list of contenders. All are public statements. The first is from last year: “Nous servons de la viande halal par respect pour la diversité, mais pas de poisson par respect pour la laïcité.” Here is another, from April of this year: “There will not be any climate justice without true gender equality.” Finally, just to lift the spirits and contribute to the gaiety of nations, here is a well-known one from 1992: “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

These apparently unrelated statements are linked by something more than the incredulity or helpless laughter they elicit. The first (quoted in Ivan Rioufoul’s excellent book, *De l’urgence d’être réactionnaire*, PUF, 2012) is how the mayor of Strasbourg, Roland Ries, thought fit to explain to bemused parents why their children’s schools serve halal meat but refuse to serve fish on Fridays. He sounds pleased with his choice of words. The second is from the European Parliament resolution of April 2012 on the connection between gender and climate change (try to keep up): it having been decided that the latter clearly exacerbates the former (or possibly vice versa), it was resolved that “the inclusion of gender issues would in its turn provide an opportunity towards a more effective, stronger and fairer fight against climate change”, and that “in order to ensure that climate action does not increase gender inequalities but results in co-benefits to the situation of women”, efforts should be made to “mainstream and integrate gender in every step of climate policies, from

conception to financing, implementation and evaluation". The third is of course Sandra Day O'Connor's famous take on liberty and the 'attributes of personhood' in *Planned Parenthood vs Casey*.

The culture wars are not what they were. True, one does wonder, with the sort of horrified fascination displayed by witnesses to car accidents, what mental contortions could have led the mayor of Strasbourg, the European Parliament and a Supreme Court Judge to such conclusions, and to utter in public statements which sound like a game of Chinese whispers gone wrong; but these examples of doublethink, surreal idiocy and – well, drivel would be a kind word, no longer strain credulity as they would have (and indeed did, in the last case) even 20 years ago; they are just a few among dozens we nowadays encounter every day. In the 1960s, even 20 or 30 years ago, doublethink was not yet so ubiquitous, even on extreme Leftist fringes, not to speak of the mainstream Left. The ideology of identity politics, 'diversity', 'multiculturalism' and 'toleration' had not yet spread its tentacles over every aspect of life and every sphere of activity, public and private. (Indeed, the private, although frequently declared to be public, had not yet actually become so, or not quite.) The Gramscian strategy of subversion through destroying the hegemony of the dominant culture (not that, I imagine, many of those whose vague aim it was thought of it in quite that way) was in the blueprint stage, and 'hegemony' was a word seldom encountered in this context. Daily life – reading the paper, listening to the talk at dinner parties, even reading academic journals – did not yet resemble watching a sci-fi horror movie in which aliens take over people's brains. And drivel was just drivel; it was not seen as dangerous, let alone institutionalized, drivel.

Or so it seems with hindsight. Certainly the counter-culture was no more sympathetic to Christianity in general or Catholicism in particular than it is today, though hysterical forms of militant atheism had not yet surfaced, let alone become mainstream. Certainly Muslims were trendy, to say the least, especially black Muslims who went in for acts of terrorism, though neither multiculturalism nor the victim culture were yet fully established. The condemnation of Israel was not yet automatic and the new antisemitism had not yet become *de rigueur* at trendy dinner parties everywhere, although Israel was attacked as a tool of American imperialism just as it is today. (Jewish parents are not mentioned in the Strasbourg example, but it is fairly safe to assume that kosher food in Strasbourg schools suffers the same fate as fish on Fridays. Not that the matter would ever arise: orthodox Jews do not generally demand that a state school cater to their children's religious dietary requirements; they send them to private religious schools. Nor can one be certain that the Muslim parents actually demanded halal meals. Quite possibly they didn't have to; quite possibly the mayor of Strasbourg, moved by a grotesque mixture of fear, servility and ideological zeal, decided to anticipate their needs.) But even if my hindsight is failing with age, one thing is certain: in the 1960s or the 1970s such things would not have been said by the mayor of Strasbourg. Or by the mayor of any city in Europe or the United States. Or – in the wonderful case of gender and

climate – by any bureaucrat (there being – O blissful days! – no Eurocrats yet). One can imagine something like the mayor’s statement being uttered, *mutatis mutandis*, only in the darkest days of the Soviet Union. It seems hard, also, to imagine a Supreme Court Judge, let alone one perceived as conservative, uttering such a sentence – however deplorably judicially active, manipulative of the Constitution, left-liberal-leaning or politically usurpatory one might have thought the Court even at the time of, say, *Roe vs Wade*. And that is one of the things that have changed.

It is hard not to mention, in this context – I mean the general context of things which just a few decades ago you couldn’t have made up, and which still strain credulity – this year’s Nobel Peace Prize to the EU. For the “advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights”. (“Is it too late”, asks the London Daily Telegraph, “for Alfred Nobel’s heirs to ask for their money back?”) Nor the new French President’s plans for education, which, according to a recent speech on the subject, appear to involve the (gradual, we’re told) abandonment of the system of awarding marks. The scale of the devastation wrought by decades of misguided, ideologically-driven policies is at last beginning to dawn even upon some bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education; and just as Britain is beginning – slowly, rather half-heartedly and to furious opposition from teachers’ unions – to try to reverse the damage, France, as if entirely oblivious to what has been going on elsewhere in the world during the past few decades, is eagerly taking up those policies. Both these things – the second perhaps more obviously than the first – are part of the culture wars today.

The point is that, once upon a time, back in the 1960s, even the 1970s, possibly the 1980s, there *was* a counter-culture. Today the counter-culture has become, with some modifications (which make it much more sinister and dangerous than the original), the dominant culture. It has achieved the Gramscian hegemony for which it strove, though of course (this being part of the plan) it continues vociferously to deny this, proclaiming itself the victim of right-wing conspiracies, censorship and discrimination – in a world where the ‘establishment’, the ‘elites’, the ‘political class’ (an entity which until recently did not exist either in the US or in Britain; it designated a phenomenon to be found mainly in France – one of those bizarre things they had on the continent) and the media are overwhelmingly left-liberal and politically correct. It is now the dominant culture which chants: “Which side are you on?” and “Hey ho, hey ho, Western culture’s got to go”. ‘Western Civ’, too, has been told it has to go, and indeed it has gone. The positions which characterized what used to be called the dominant culture, or the ‘establishment’, have now become a sort of counter-culture. And this, chiefly, is the side in the culture wars which speaks in terms of ‘culture wars’.

The other side – the side which has now become the dominant culture – does not, for the most part, seem to be aware of any culture wars. It sees, or claims to see, the problem in terms of ‘human rights’, ‘diversity’, ‘toleration’, etc. In other words, the other side of the culture wars, at least its hard core, has to such an extent internalized (that is to say, been brainwashed by) its own ideological slogans and its own

manipulation of language for political ends that it is no longer able to perceive the world in the same basic categories. For them, good and evil, truth and falsity, right and wrong, insofar as these things are admitted to exist at all, have acquired new meaning; ‘human rights’, ‘toleration’, ‘equality’, ‘opportunity’, ‘diversity’, ‘democracy’, ‘pluralism’, ‘consensus’, ‘inclusion’, ‘exclusion’, ‘access’ and many other terms indiscriminately flung about daily by politicians, journalists, activists and ideologues of every variety, mean something quite different from what they used to mean, and from what to some of us they still mean. (Insofar, that is, as they have any meaning at all. This, again, is not very far: they are used as slogans and in every case made to mean whatever the speaker would like them to mean, to an extent that would give even Humpty Dumpty pause.) There is no longer any common ground, and therefore no possibility of debate. This, at least, is the situation in Poland, Great Britain and, as far as I can make out, the US.

I speak above of ‘sides’. Nothing odd in that, perhaps, since we are speaking of culture wars, in every war there are (at least) two sides. But there is more than just that to this business of “sides”. Since the 1960s, attitudes have become so polarized, and at the same time the content over which the culture wars are fought so extensive, that the battlefield now consists of two sides, arrayed in ranks, baying at each other. ‘Sides’ are all there is; we might as well all be chanting the old American communist song “Which Side Are You On?”. This chant is what all debate, all argument, has been reduced to. Again, this is the case in both Britain and the US, but perhaps most strikingly – and dismayingly – in Poland. And this is the second thing that has changed.

A note on the Gramscian strategy (back in fashion at good universities everywhere: at least one well-known trendy post-modernist American professor of literature at an Ivy League college includes the work of Gramsci in his ‘Great Books’ course). Gramsci’s idea was that the working class, if it is to seize power, must first achieve hegemony over the dominant bourgeois culture by creating and imposing its own, a universal culture free of bourgeois superstition. No wonder Gramsci is back in fashion. The word ‘hegemony’, especially in combination with the word ‘culture’, crops up with depressing regularity in today’s postmodernist, feminist, multiculturalist discourse. Indoctrinating the working class to destroy capitalism and attain cultural hegemony by destroying the dominant culture has a very familiar ring: substitute ‘persecuted minority’ for ‘the working class’ and it is exactly what we have today. Destroying the ‘bourgeois’ culture in order to create a brave new world of universal values is what today’s multiculturalist discourse is all about. It is what multiculturalists have in mind as they labour to invent yet more minority groups (defined by ethnicity, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation and whatever else they can come up with) which they can then label as persecuted and squeeze into the straightjacket of group identity. The next step is to demand special privileges for them as ‘victims’, thereby placing them above the law; to condemn all criticism of their behaviour, religion or culture as racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia etc., and to kindle in them

a sense of grievance, which is then carefully stoked and lovingly nurtured. Whether they have in fact suffered any real injury or discrimination is irrelevant; as minorities they are victims by definition, and the State is expected to atone for the wrongs done to them by the granting of privileges. This is the dominant culture today: a culture of grievance, victimhood and resentment. It is worth noting, in passing, that the destruction of the common culture and increased dependency on the State greatly contribute to the ease with which people can be manipulated – a fact which cannot have escaped Gramsci just as it has not escaped today's ideologues of multiculturalism.

The word 'hegemony' is not a neutral one; it is laden with hatred of Western culture – the culture of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and oppression. There can in any case be no other kind of hegemony, since hegemony is by definition enjoyed by the oppressors and persecutors, the colonialists, imperialists and capitalists, not forgetting the patriarchy. When we superimpose the Gramscian blueprint on today's culture wars, certain features common to the discourse of the various ideological currents in fashion today – multiculturalism, radical feminism, postmodernism and identity politics – emerge with stark clarity. 'Hegemony', 'patriarchy', 'social construct', 'colonialism' – these are part of a common language which reflects a certain view of the world. And that view of the world seems to be the dominant culture today.

One might object that the Gramscian strategy has worked only up to a point; that achieving cultural hegemony has not so far led to the seizing of power. But has it not, in a way? Western governments have to a large extent submitted to the exigencies of the politically correct, so that today it is not just pious expressions of political correctness but active promotion of PC agendas that is obligatory. And it is obligatory not just in humanities departments and among the chattering classes, but among the 'political class' and among left-liberal elites everywhere. Its mechanism is familiar: if you are so rash as to disagree with one of the tenets which form the hard, unquestionable core of the PC worldview, you are beneath contempt and unfit for human conversation. Whatever you say, on any topic, may be simply dismissed. Just as, back in the days of the cold war, you were automatically condemned as a 'cold warrior' if you claimed, for instance, that such-and-such an organization was a Soviet front, or that the Rosenbergs (on whom more in a moment) were justly convicted, or that it was silly and wrong to claim moral equivalence between the US and the USSR, etc., so today, if you claim, for instance, that children need authority and discipline and competition, or that the learning of facts might not be an entirely evil, oppressive, discriminatory and useless thing, or that Western civilisation is neither wholly to be condemned nor responsible for all the world's evils, or that 'Western Civ' should be taught at universities, or that departments of Comparative or English Literature should not be devoted entirely to 'theory', or that the current bloated form of the welfare state has produced a culture of dependency, or express any other forbidden view on any of a dismayingly vast number of topics, you are labelled a 'fascist'. But more than that. As Leszek Kolakowski wrote long ago in an essay called "The Heritage of the Left", "Since a cold warrior was wrong by definition, it followed logically

that there were no concentration camps in the USSR". In the same way, if today one expresses any of the views listed above, or scepticism about any of the other tenets on the PC agenda, such as gay marriage, quotas for women, the evidence for anthropogenic global warming, equality of outcome, equal representation for every conceivable ethnic, religious or racial group in every conceivable institution, and especially if one then ventures to suggest that such things as equality before the law, equality of opportunity, discipline, authority, national sovereignty etc. might be more useful sorts of things – one is labelled 'extreme right' or 'fascist', and it logically follows from this not only that all one's opinions must be wrong, but also that certain facts about the world which one adduces in support of them cannot really be facts.

So, one might say, what's new, if such logic on the part of the Western Left was standard during the cold war? What is new, perhaps, is not the logic itself, but the frequency with which it is encountered, and most of all the huge range of subjects to which it is applied, where once it was confined mostly to discussions of communism and the Soviet Union. The extreme polarization – the reduction of world opinion to two sides between which there can be no rational debate – marks another change. It is not just that rational debate is not felt to be needed; it is actively rejected. It is no longer acceptable, nowadays, to try to explain that, for example, 'fairness' and 'social justice' are not the same thing as the rule of law, or to argue that the principle of equality of opportunity is superior to that of equality of outcome. It has been tried. It cannot be done. Rational argument itself seems to have become a 'fascist' way of going about things.

It is worth noting in passing that for much of today's Left, the labels 'fascist', 'extreme-right', 'conservative', 'right-wing' and 'evil' have become almost synonymous: to be 'right-wing' is considered morally repugnant, whatever the content of one's supposed right-wingness; and once you are labelled 'right-wing' or 'conservative', 'extreme right' and 'fascist' ineluctably and indiscriminately follow. As a consequence all these labels are bereft of meaning – except, of course, that of being 'on the wrong side'. To label someone as 'right-wing' or 'conservative' is no more than to express disapproval. This, too, seems to mark a change.

A brief digression about the Rosenbergs, since attitudes to them on the Left – attitudes to all appearances quite unchanged for over half a century, in spite of the evidence – mirror certain attitudes today, in a broader context. In September 2008, the startling headline "Rosenbergs guilty!" appeared in the US press. A bit late, you would have thought; there was an odd feeling of *déjà-vu*. For most of us there was never much doubt of the Rosenbergs' guilt, but for large swathes of the American Left their innocence was, as Ronald Radosh writes in his excellent book about the American Left ("Comrades: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left and the Leftover Left", Encounter Books 2001), an incontrovertible truth: they were innocent progressives, persecuted for their ideals and their devotion to peace; their conviction was an attack on free speech, an attempt to stifle independent thought, the result of anti-communist hysteria, etc., etc. Another book by

Radosh and Joyce Milton (“The Rosenberg File”, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, NY 1983) ought to have put all such doubts to rest, but – predictably, perhaps – it failed to do so. And even now that Morton Sobell has confessed, after more than half a century, that both he and Rosenberg were Soviet spies (which is what those September 2008 headlines were about), the case is unlikely to be closed in the minds of some of the American Left. They will continue, absurdly and irrelevantly, as they did in the case of Alger Hiss, saying: he meant well; he didn’t do any real harm; it was in a good cause.

In the West, among the Left, the two main pillars which supported the edifice of leftist ideology during the cold war are still standing, very much like (to coin a phrase) two vast and trunkless legs of stone in the desert. Despite the decay of that colossal wreck they remain unquestionable principles, but now they support a vastly broader ideology. They are the principle of moral equivalence between the US and the Soviet Union, and the principle that communism and Nazism must never be compared. The idea behind the first of these, undigested, unargued and cheerfully accepted everywhere, like the VISA card, is that both were “empires”, and all empires are evil (although the Soviet Union far less evil than others). The idea behind the second is that fascism was and remains the worst of all possible evils; communism must therefore be a lesser evil. And in any case – all together now – the communists meant well. And of course the Soviet Union – let’s hear it again, nice and loud, yes, you too there at the back – led the fight against fascism. That crude Soviet propaganda tool, the myth which equated anti-fascism with Soviet communism, was extraordinarily successful. It justified everything. It was bolstered by another lie, distinguished by a logical flaw unfortunately characteristic of much leftist ideological thought, past and present, namely that since all those who supported the Soviet Union were against fascism, it followed that all those who were against fascism must support the Soviet Union.

The bizarre resurgence of the second of these principles in Poland, where ‘anti-communism’ has become a word not to be pronounced in polite left-wing society, also brings a sense of *déjà-vu*, but in reverse. The same people who once, in the 70s and 80s, expended so much effort on combating the thick layers of falsehood in the idea of ‘anti-anti-communism’, to which so much of the American Left was wedded, have now emerged as its defenders. In post-communist Poland, which, from a deep fear of being perceived as backward, primitive and provincial, longs to be – and to be perceived as – modern, cosmopolitan and trendy, the adoption of all Western *idées reçues*, whatever their content, is obligatory. What matters most, in Poland as elsewhere, is being on the right side – the side of light. To be on the wrong side is to be on the side of darkness. Being on the side of light has two further advantages: it procures a pleasant feeling of moral superiority, and it eliminates the need to produce arguments for one’s views or to consider the consequences of whatever one is proposing. Nothing as tedious as thinking is required. Being on the right side is perfectly sufficient (another reason rational debate has become impossible).

A few decades ago opinions were not so polarized, and the PC ideology neither as rigid nor as all-encompassing as it has become. Of course, in the 70s and 80s you were still pilloried as ‘right-wing’ if you ventured to express some support for, say, Thatcher or Reagan; but although ‘right-wing’ was certainly considered a peculiar and somewhat suspicious thing to be, it did not yet automatically mean that you were evil and immoral; it was not yet interchangeable with ‘extreme right’. ‘Fascist’ has of course been around as a term of abuse for a very long time (my husband has just pointed out to me that he was called a fascist in France back in 1967 for reading *Le Figaro*), so here, again, perhaps there is not much of a change. But the way the term is used today does seem both more automatic and more widespread, and the range of attitudes perceived as right-wing to which it is applied is much wider.

One spectacular example of how this has changed was the widely displayed indignation at the announcement a few years ago that the Nobel Prize for literature had gone to Vargas Llosa. “But he’s right-wing!” literary critics spluttered in horror and disbelief. And immediately, predictably, there followed, as the night the day: “A neo-liberal!”, “Extreme right!” – even though the poor man is nothing of the kind; he is a perfectly ordinary free-market liberal. Their incredulity was genuine; they really seemed shocked. And of course what made it worse was that Vargas Llosa was an apostate, a renegade; he had been a socialist and he had renounced socialism. This made him particularly unpalatable. What is striking here is not just this reaction itself, nor just its immediacy, its ferociousness and its global nature, but the fact that it was expressed openly, shamelessly, as something obvious. It really seemed inconceivable to the people who said these things that a right-winger, whatever his literary merits (and in any case his supposed right-wingness meant that he could not possibly have any) could deserve any kind of prize. A decade ago, certainly two, the chattering classes would have limited themselves to expressing their shock at dinner parties, among themselves; their view of the world was not yet universally acknowledged as something that went without saying.

This polarization has been accompanied by two related developments. The first is the increasing circumscription of our freedoms: the narrowing of the space between what is forbidden and what is mandatory. The second is the spread of that ideology to more and more areas of our lives. Both are consequences of the nature – ‘totalitarian’ is not too strong an adjective to describe it – of PC ideology, which naturally aims to be all-encompassing. It contrives, in a way familiar to those acquainted with Marxist dialectics, to connect everything with everything else, wrapping our lives in a closely-knit, stifling blanket of interdependent taboos, impositions, injunctions and bans, many of which have been enshrined in law. There seem very few subjects left on which one is not required to hold the PC view, from global warming (now known as climate change, so that cooling can fit in with the theory of warming – do try to keep up), GM food, quotas for women, books for children, habitats for polar bears and ‘sustainability’ (for just about everything – not surprisin-

gly, given that it generally means impoverishing poor black people and enriching the rich white people who have thought up the sustainability schemes), to homeopathy (on which more below), vaccines, the reasons for hurricanes (see ‘climate change’), university positions for the mentally handicapped, the awfulness of religion (but only Christianity and Judaism), the vileness of Israel, the perfidy of the Jews, Obama’s ability (to include some American examples) to halt the supposed rise of the oceans (see ‘climate change’), the constitutionality of Obamacare (the argument for which, before the Supreme Court saw fit to see it as a tax, will surely go down in history as “the broccoli argument”), and of course (in Europe) the wonderfulness of the EU (the existence of which is the only thing preventing another Holocaust) and the infallibility, incorruptibility and benevolence of Euro-apparatchiks.

A word on homeopathy and why I have included it in the above list. Accompanying all this, and somehow correlated with it, is an alarming rise in the popularity of pseudo-science and new-age gibberish on the one hand and the disinclination for rationality on the other. The causality involved is not (at least to me) entirely clear, but somewhere there is a case to be made for a connection between the abandonment of rationality, indeed the glorification of irrationality, and the abandonment of argument I mentioned earlier: where no debate is possible and views are pre-packaged and oven-ready, argument is neither wanted nor needed, and it would be odd if this were unrelated to the desire – quite visible in PC ideology – to dispense with rationality altogether. The belief in homeopathy is symptomatic of this. And homeopathy does in fact seem – on the basis of anecdotal evidence – to be a PC thing; attempts to ridicule it by appeals to scientific evidence are regularly met with sneers and outrage.

The glorification of irrationality may also be related to the many contradictions inherent in PC ideology. For example: all cultures are equally valuable but Western culture has no value at all; there are no absolute values, but some things – Western culture, capitalism, Israel – are absolute evils; women are vastly superior to men but also entirely equal; women are defined by their biology but at the same time “gender” is no more than a social construct; Marxism must be retained as a guiding principle, but so must ecological concerns about Nature and the Planet (which are no more than a new form of romanticism); the number of ‘human rights’ must continue to increase and the emphasis on human dignity must be maintained, but no such thing as human nature can be conceded to exist; morality and tradition may be dismissed on the dubious basis of evidence from neuropsychology, but scientific evidence in other areas must be selectively rejected; Islam must be defended, but so must the decent treatment of women. This last is, it has often been pointed out, something of a problem for multicultural feminists, although they appear not to have realised the extent of it; quite possibly it will not impinge on their raised consciousness until we are all living under Sharia law. For the moment the contradiction between upholding, on the one hand, the rights of women and homosexuals and, on the other, the principle that all cultures are equal (except of course Western culture, which is worse),

does not seem to bother them. But why should it, since what matters is being on the right side and enjoying the comfortable feeling of moral superiority that being on the right side procures? This, too, seems to be a development – or at least a more salient feature – of this stage of the culture wars. The 1980s were known, fairly or not, as the “me-decade”, but the appellation would suit the 2000s and 2010s very well. Saving the world seems of secondary importance to feeling good about wanting to.

But perhaps the most important development in the culture wars since the 1960s is the gradual institutionalization of PC agendas. In their long march through the institutions, they have now succeeded in shaping government policy. And this – since PC ideology is by nature, like all ideologies, blind to consequences – is perhaps the most dangerous as well as the most striking development. Hence, in defiance of all reason and despite clear evidence of disastrous consequences, the adoption of policies – energy, educational and social policies being the most striking – that have brought wind farms, soaring energy bills and, in Britain over the next few years, ineluctable power shortages, produced two generations of illiterate and innumerate school-leavers, made a mockery of university degrees, stifled private enterprise and initiative, ghettoized minorities, fostered Islamic extremism, antisemitism and discrimination against Christians, drastically weakened the principle of equality before the law, condoned the censorship of some while protecting the privileges of others, and encouraged a culture of dependency, irresponsibility, victimhood and resentment.

One of the more disturbing developments in this sad list is the abandonment, in Britain (and indeed in the US, through manipulation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment), of the principle of equality before the law. There it goes, one feels; wave it goodbye. And once it has gone, it will be hard to re-establish. In Britain it is not just that one has far fewer rights (to free speech, but not only that) as a Christian than one does if one is a Muslim; the penalties for a crime are actually tougher if it is racially or religiously motivated – a ‘hate crime’. Crimes motivated by the victim’s sexual orientation and disability also come into this category. (But not crimes connected with what is known as ‘ageism’, because – as I read in a BBC report from February of this year – “there is no statutory definition of a crime against an older person”.) It comes as no surprise to learn that only a very small percentage of prosecutions for hate crimes involve a white victim. It seems safe to suppose that an equally small percentage involve Christians and Jews. The law on hate crimes is vague and easily manipulated. This, from the point of view of the institutionalized multicultural agenda that gave rise to it, is clearly the point; except for cases of verbal abuse, it is hard to see how such motivation could be reliably established. I must say I don’t much care whether I am murdered as a Jew or an infidel or for my money. The State would care, though – but only if I were black or Muslim.

The consequences of the Gramscian blueprint’s legislative successes – the enshrinement in law of successive tenets of the now dominant PC culture – increasingly make themselves felt in our daily lives, most notably in the form of selective attempts to censor free speech. All are grotesque to varying degrees, but some to such an

extent that they deserve special mention. Here are a few examples – again, picked with difficulty from a long list of excellent candidates.

The first is the trial, earlier this year, of Lars Hedegaard, president of the Danish Free Press Society, accused of violating Denmark's hate speech laws by speaking of some of the less than entirely satisfactory ways in which Muslim women are sometimes treated by their families, with a special mention of rape and honour killings. He was acquitted (the judges having found no evidence of 'intent of public dissemination'). Danish MP Jesper Langballe, however, who had come out in support of his remarks, was convicted. Thus the dissemination of facts can now be prosecuted as hate speech whenever the expression of those facts is deemed by the State to be inconvenient. The case of the Dutch politician Geert Wilders was rather different, involving as it did the expression of opinion – in the form of criticism of Islam – not the dissemination of facts: he was charged with insulting Islam and inciting hatred and discrimination against Muslims. He was eventually acquitted. Whatever the merits of the case against him, two things are worth noting. The first is that, while perhaps not all his actions could be considered the exercise of free speech and on that count deserving of protection, some, perhaps most, undoubtedly could; and in large part he was in fact tried for inciting debate (about taboo subjects such as Muslim immigration), not discrimination. The second is that one of the days of his trial in Amsterdam coincided with a pro-Palestinian demonstration, also in Amsterdam, in the course of which some of the demonstrators chanted "Jews to the gas chambers" and waved banners expressing the same general idea. None of them, as far as I know, stood trial for any offence or was ever accused of hate speech.

Another equally well-known example that deserves mention is a British one: that of the Johns, a husband and wife who for many years have fostered children. The Johns are black, which in this case is immaterial. They are also pious Christians, which is not. They have always been considered excellent foster-parents. Last year a British court ruled that they may no longer foster children because their views were too 'old-fashioned'. More specifically, they refused to indoctrinate the children in their care as to the superiority of homosexuality over heterosexuality. (A new British adoption law now requires local authorities to make sure that foster- and adoptive parents bring up the children in their care in an atmosphere of respect for 'toleration' and 'diversity'. One result of this has been the closure of Catholic adoption agencies in Britain.) The Johns' foster-children are all between five and ten years old. The Johns have never raised the subject of homosexuality with them and very much doubt that they would ever have occasion to do so. Nevertheless, the court found that the right of homosexuals to protection from discrimination trumps the right of Christians to the free expression of their faith and moral values. The court also saw fit to suggest that what was most objectionable, and potentially most harmful to the children in their care, was not so much the John's faith as their moral views.

The fact that the Johns are black no longer counts for much; the gradations in identity politics have changed, and being homosexual now trumps being black. But

one wonders what would have happened had the Johns been Muslim. The court may well have reached a different verdict, if only from fear.

It is also worth mentioning that in Sweden priests have been prosecuted, and in some cases sentenced to terms in prison, for preaching biblical sexual morality in church. Similarly in Canada, where expressions of support for biblical morality, especially those parts of its pertaining to homosexuals, can be prosecuted as hate speech, even when preached in church.

All these things are developments of the past decade or so. Few of us, I think, could have imagined, back in the early days of the culture wars in the 1960s, even the 70s, how much worse things would become.

It is tempting at this point to remark that nostalgia, too, ain't what it used to be – an observation hard to resist, but not entirely gratuitous for all that. We never thought we would look back on the 1960s, even the 1970s, as an age of blithe innocence; all these things were in the future. No wind farms, no global warming industry (in the 1970s the big scare was an imminent new ice age), no radical Islam, multiculturalism not yet institutionalized, universities not yet entirely dedicated to social engineering and ideological indoctrination, humanities departments – even comparative literature – not yet destroyed, science respected, antisemitism not yet mainstream on the Left, religion – even Christianity – still accepted, though frowned upon, postmodernism only just beginning, geography lessons at school still including maps of the world rather than concentrating on the evils of colonialism and anthropogenic global warming, history lessons not yet limited to enumerating the evils of imperialism and the exploitation of minorities, and the famous “Third Way” (aptly described, in a phrase which I wish I had come up with but which I think came from the pen of Mark Steyn, as something between the Second Coming and the fourth dimension) not yet every politician's favourite currency. The failure to profess and teach relativism – cultural, historical, moral and of every other variety – was not yet enough to preclude one from a university position. The word ‘non-judgmental’ was not yet on everyone's lips. The apparently limitless proliferation of ‘rights’ (notably including the right to “define one's own concept of...” etc.), perhaps the most pernicious development of all, and the most pregnant in consequences, was still in the future. So was the European Court of Human Rights and its perverse predilection for restraining, rather than defending, free speech. In the future, too – albeit the very near future – was European terrorism. Now we have come full circle and it is in the (very near) future once again: it seems that the trendy left-wing European intelligentsia is nostalgic for the days of the Baader-Meinhof gang and the Red Brigades, and has apparently decided that maybe it would be fun to have another go. In America, universities are happily engaging in the glorification of ex-terrorists and providing them with professorial posts. And as academic departments go under for lack of funds and local authorities cancel basic services, there never seems to be any shortage of funds for such essentials as diversity officers, outreach enablers, racial equality assessors and lesbian and transgender centres. And courses on the Occupy

Wall Street ‘philosophy’ (courtesy of Oregon State University). And of course gender and queer studies.

Finally, two more fairly recent developments must be mentioned: the new antisemitism of the Left, now mainstream, and the rise of militant atheism, courtesy, to a large extent, of Dawkins & Hitchens. The first is more *de rigeur*, and more dangerous, than the second; the second would not be worth speaking about were it not for a more serious problem which it is doing its best – consciously or not – to aggravate.

The new antisemitism of the Left, which most often, but unconvincingly, hides – as it did in the old days of the Soviet era – under the cloak of “anti-Zionism”, is not, in fact, new at all. But in the past it was limited to leftist fringes. Today Israel has become indefensible in fashionable society. It is not allowed to defend itself, and any attempt to defend it is considered grossly ill-mannered – like blowing your nose in your napkin, or tearing at a dish on the table with your hands – and merits expulsion from polite society. (At dinner parties, the example to follow if you want to get on is that of the French ambassador to Great Britain, who some years ago famously referred to Israel as “that shitty little country”). The Gaza strip is regularly compared to the Warsaw Ghetto; Israelis are compared to Nazis. NGOs (the great majority of them avowedly biased, some linked to terrorist organisations) and the left-liberal media in the West Bank and Gaza deluge the press with grossly falsified reports and doctored photographs of purported Israeli atrocities. Some of these people may be useful idiots, the innocent dupes of Palestinian propaganda; but many clearly know what they are doing. In France, those who a few years ago were proved in court to have falsified a television documentary knew exactly what they were doing. Academic boycotts are perhaps the new antisemitism’s most visible form – except for isolated incidents like the attempt to stage a new Kristallnacht in Rome a few years ago, or the recent murders of Jews in France; but these may have more to do with the old antisemitism than with the new. In the case of France they also clearly have to do with disaffected French Muslim youths (or just “youths”, as they are spoken of in the press, for to mention that they are Muslim would be racist); and the most recent murders of Jews in France were the work of a jihadist. But it is not just that there are boycotts; it is that people dare not refuse to join them, let alone publicly oppose them. It was never like this with South African grapes. Few academics are brave enough to utter a public condemnation of such boycotts. At UCLA, where a professor’s course page contained a link to a website urging a boycott of Israel, it was the brave students (and some faculty) who dared to protest that were condemned by the university community. That is the situation today. Much has been written in recent years about the rise of the new antisemitism and the reasons for it; among recent articles of interest are Nick Cohen’s “How the Left Turned Against the Jews” (Standpoint, Summer 2012), Ben Cohen’s “The Big Lie Returns” (Commentary, February 2012), Ron Radosh’s “When the American Left Loved Israel” (Commentary, November 2012) and, again by Ron Radosh, a September 2012 column in PJ Media, which contains an unusually clear quote from Judith Butler, that infallible purveyor of impenetrable

prose and regular contributor to the gaiety of nations. But for once she couldn't be clearer. Here it is, for the benefit of those who were in any doubt on the matter: "Understanding Hamas and Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive and that are on the left, that are part of the global left, is extremely important."

As for militant atheism, the problem is not its contribution to the creeping secularization everyone seems to be lamenting: Christianity is doing fine in many parts of the world and the Church of Rome, having survived for two thousand years, may be considered well able to take care of itself. What is disturbing is the artificial polarization between atheists on the one hand and Creationists on the other, as if no one else existed: not agnostics, not mild Church of England clergymen, not ordinary, rational Christians who see no conflict between science and faith and do not take the Bible literally. This is a real problem; and it seems to me that in the culture wars it is this, most of all, that should be addressed. Both Dawkins and Hitchens have proved in their books that their grasp of history in general, and of the history of Christianity more specifically, is, to put it delicately, slight; the trouble is that – in large part because the teaching of Christianity and the Bible has been long abandoned in schools as politically incorrect – the general reader, especially the young general reader, is no better placed. Christianity and the Judeo-Christian tradition, Creationists, 'fundamentalist Christians' of every variety – all are indiscriminately lumped together and together sneered at, reviled and blamed for all the world's ills since the beginning of time. It's just like John Lennon's "Imagine", but less catchy. But the division into atheists on one side and everyone else on the other is false, pernicious and artificial; and alliances with Creationists, which some conservatives seem to be tempted by, far from helping to preserve Christian values, seem to me misguided and dangerous – as alliances with one's enemy's enemy usually are. They should be resisted. (Come to that, any alliance with people who think that Adam and Eve walked the earth together with dinosaurs should probably be avoided.)

A final word, in this context, about Poland, which seems to be composed of two extremes with a yawning abyss in the middle. On the one hand, there is the trendy Left – not merely anticlerical but anti-Christian, increasingly militant in its atheism, and much influenced by fashionable Western PC agendas. It can do post-modernism, diversity, toleration, multiculturalism and radical feminism with the best of them; in its championing of gay rights and its loathing for family values it tries hard not to be outdone. On the other, there is the Catholic right – and that seems to be the only right there is, give or take a handful of people. A large part of it is – to list a few of the things I personally find uncongenial – in favour of a total ban on both abortion and IVF, against civil partnerships and genuinely discriminatory against homosexuals, in the sense that they would quite like to deny them equality before the law if they could (however much one might dislike Gay Pride marches, trying to ban them seems – especially now that they are an accepted spectacle in every European city – strategically unwise; and suggestions that homosexuals should be given therapy to cure them of their homosexuality would, I think, be met with in-

credulity and distaste by most Western liberals, conservative or not). They are, if not actually anti-free-market, certainly not all that concerned with diminishing the role of the state. Unsurprisingly, they do not go out of their way to promote individual responsibility. An alarming amount of succumbing to the temptation to relinquish liberalism to the Left goes on (as it admittedly also does in the US). The gap in the middle seems larger, and the extremes more extreme, than elsewhere in Europe. I doubt whether the Catholic right, if it came to power, would prove strong enough – especially in the face of pressure from the EU – to implement its reforms. The other extreme, however – the anti-Christian PC Left, in favour of big government and uncritical of the EU – has a much better chance, and its influence will increase. Rigid and often illiberal Catholic conservatism does not seem to be the most effective weapon against it.

One thing, however, the Polish Right is emphatically not, and that is antisemitic. Not as a whole, not in its mainstream, and not even all that much on its fringes. This – because of the accusations of antisemitism regularly flung at it by the Left, which is unfortunately the main source of reports about Poland in the Western press – needs to be said very strongly, which is why it gets a paragraph to itself. Pockets of the old variety of antisemitism still exist, of course; but the only accusation that can be fairly made against the Polish Right as a whole – and it is a sufficiently serious one in itself – is that it is reluctant to take firm steps to stifle it when it does appear in its ranks.

All this is depressing to us Jewish agnostic libertarian conservatives with a great deal of respect for the Christian roots of Western culture. (And of course also to all varieties of goyish agnostic ditto.) It is not the manufactured pseudo-gap between religious Christians and non-believers that we should mind, or any of the gaps regularly deplored by the Left in its determination to ignore improvements and concentrate on relative conditions (a determination arising in large degree from the culture of resentment which it does so much to promote), such as the widening gap between rich and poor, or the gap – manufactured by the policies of those whose avowed aim was precisely to prevent it – between the kinds of education they can hope to receive. Of course we should and do mind these gaps, particularly the latter, and particularly since, being a manufactured gap, it would be fairly easily to cure. But those who bemoan this gap *as a gap* – who bemoan the gap itself, rather than the state of affairs occurring on one side of it – respond with cries of outrage to any genuine attempt to eliminate it. This confirms the suspicion that they do not really mind it at all: what matters most to them is the feeling of moral superiority derived from the conviction that they are on the right side – the side of light. To question the means they propose to achieve their aims is to be on the side of darkness. Here, again, is the blindness to consequences and the indifference to results, even if they are patently counter-productive, that are characteristic of ideological thinking. And here, again, is the culture of resentment which leads the gap-bemoaners to concentrate, in their policy proposals, on condemning those on the privileged side of the gap rather than

improving conditions for those on the other. In the case of secondary education, the reigning principle is that of the lowest common denominator: let them all sink, as long as they are equally sunk. This, too, is characteristic. Which brings me to the real gap.

The real gap we should mind is that yawning empty space in the centre of the culture wars: the gap created by the extreme polarization of opinion. It is the gap between the all-encompassing PC ideology that is obligatory today and the too rigidly conservative extremes of what has become, to all intents and purposes, the counter-culture; the gap between those on the atheist Left who contrive simultaneously to embrace irrationality and scientism and those on the religious Right who, in what sometimes seems like a childish fit of pique, reject liberalism altogether rather than attempting to combine it with Christian values. (This, to those of us who think it important to salvage liberalism for the Right, seems like throwing out the baby with the bathwater. But to them it is just bathwater, and some of them heave a sigh of relief as they see it go down the plughole. Their baby is elsewhere.) It is the gap between those who rip up Bibles in public demonstrations of loathing against religion and those who think it more important for schools to teach the catechism of the Church of Rome than the Bible; between those on the religious Right who are tempted towards a new form of Marcionism and those on the Left who, by rejecting the past, embrace a different sort of Marcionism; between those who would force the state to grant privileges to minority groups and those who believe that their faith forbids granting them equality before the law; between two extremes who in different ways reject individual responsibility and favour the murky and ill-defined thing they call 'social justice' over liberty. Between, in other words, two kinds of illiberalism. Perhaps liberalism does ineluctably lead to the situation we have today; but we cannot be certain of this, and the suspicion that it does is not a good enough reason for abandoning it. The alternatives are worse.

Mind the gap: nowe wojny kulturowe

Autorka stawia pytanie, czy możliwe jest zracjonalizowanie dyskursu o wojnach kulturowych w taki sposób, aby krańcowa polaryzacja opinii została zredukowana do zrównoważonego dyskursu akademickiego. Zastanawia się także, czy jest możliwe znalezienie przestrzeni intelektualnej i kulturowej dla powstrzymania totalitarnej doktryny poprawności politycznej oraz ekstremizmu konserwatywnego, który staje się zjawiskiem kontrkulturowym, wykluczającym dyskusję akademicką.